(c) if appropriate action not taken, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPBK SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) and (c) Department of Agriculture an Cooperation is primarily responsible for sustainable agriculture production. Through implementation of various schemes, the Department promotes agriculture development, supports soil and water conservation schemes towards agriculture expansion and consolidation, promotes expansion and strengthening of agriculture infrastructure. These activities benefit farmers of all categories including SC/ST. As the schemes are area specific and production oriented in nature, funds are not demanded on the basis of population of SC/ST. However, wherever possible, Special component Plan (SCP) for SCs and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for STs are carved out of the annual plans.

Measures to combat drought in Central and North-Western part

4898. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what plan his Ministry has taken to counter the recurring drought in the Central and North-Western part of the country, permanently;

(b) what is the forest cover percentage in these drought hit States; and

(c) whether there is any plan to improve environment in these States by afforestation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPBK SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) It is primarily the responsibility of the State Government concerned to undertaken necessary relief measures in the wake of natural calamities. The Government of India supplements the efforts of the State Government by provinding resources in accordance with the recommendations appointed from time to time.

(b) and (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Protection against exploitation of farmers

4899. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether farmers from various parts of the-country have sought protection against exploitation by multinational companies and inclusion of a

full chapter related to their rights in the Protection of Plant Varieties in the Farmers Rights Bill, 1999; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPB K SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill, 1999 prepared by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 14.12.1999. The Bill has now been referred to a Joint Committee of the Houses on the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill, 1999. The Committee has received suggestions from farmers/groups of farmers and representatives of various organisations for a separate chapter on "Farmers' Rights in the protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill, 1999 to safeguard the interest of fanners.

Agricultural credit

4900. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether farmers get adequate and timely credit to raise their crop;

(b) if so, the instructions issued in this regard; and

(c) the measures taken to ensure that such farmers do not face hardship for receiving credits?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPBK SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) to (c) Under the existing Crop Loan System of lending to the farmers, loans are provided on the basis of scale of Finance for different crops which are fixed after taking into account all the requirements *i.e.* cost of cultivation, variations in climatic conditions etc. In order to provide adequate credit to the farmers, domestic scheduled commercial banks are required to lend 18% of net bank credit for agriculture sector. Further, the commercial banks have been advised by the RBI to introduce Special Agricultural Credit plan (SCAP) since 1994-95.

For ensuring the flow of timely and adequate credit to the farmers and removing the hardship in receiving credit, a number of steps have been taken as indicated below:

— Most of the recommendations of High Level Committee (R. V. Gupta Committee) on agricultural credit which include simplification of